Debt Forgiveness as an ancient technique for Mind Control

Apollonian Germ
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"Debt Forgiveness" as an early form of mind control...

How were early populations of people enslaved by oligarchs? Brute force alone could never have been enough to secure the power and authority of the ruling elite... some amount of "mind control" was always necessary. The following is an exploration of this idea in regards to debt relief (which is tied directly to the religious notion of "redemption") as a technique to create a sense of dependence and gratitute toward the ruling elite. There are many examples of this in the ancient world, but the best to begin with is that of Joseph's (in)famous granaries.

Genesis 41: *34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. 35 They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. 36 This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."*

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. 47 During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. 48 Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. 49 Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

56 When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. 57 And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere. Genesis 47: *13 There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. 14 Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace. 15 When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone."*

16 "Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone." 17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

18 When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. 19 Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

20 So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, 21 and Joseph reduced the people to servitude,[c] from one end of Egypt to the other. 22 However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

23 Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. 24 But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children."

25 "You have saved our lives," they said. "May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh."

26 So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt—still in force today—that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's. So, Joseph robbed the Egyptian people of all their valuables, all their livestock and land, and then threatened them with slavery, only to "forgive" their slavery by "allowing" them to work the land they once owned for the price of sending Pharaoh 1/5th of their produce each year.

This TRICKED the people who felt they were actually indebted to the Pharaoh for giving them grain and "saving their lives" into being better obedience serfs for him-- for someone in the grips of a famine and then suddenly presented with food, it is difficult to think rationally and realize you were just conned big time... you can only be grateful you have eaten and are alive.

Compare that to what happened in ancient Greece:

Solon, the "great lawgiver" of Athens, who had clear ties to Egypt, as he fled there for 10 years immediately after introducing his reforms in Athens, introduced the concept of debt relief to the enslaved Athenian majority--

"...there was conflict between the nobles and the common people for an extended period. For the constitution they were under was oligarchic in every respect and especially in that the poor, along with their wives and children, were in slavery to the rich...All the land was in the hands of a few. And if men did not pay their rents, they themselves and their children were liable to be seized as slaves. The security for all loans was the debtor's person up to the time of Solon. He was the first people's champion." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solon)

"Under the pre-existing legal status, according to the account of the Constitution of the Athenians attributed to Aristotle, debtors unable to repay their creditors would surrender their land to them, then becoming hektemoroi, i.e. serfs who cultivated what used to be their own land and gave one sixth of produce to their creditors.

Should the debt exceed the perceived value of debtor's total assets, then the debtor and his family would become the creditor's slaves as well. The same would result if a man defaulted on a debt whose collateral was the debtor's personal freedom." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seisachtheia)

And just as proof that Solon was an unscrupulous fellow:

"As archon, Solon discussed his intended reforms with some friends. Knowing that he was about to cancel all debts, these friends took out loans and promptly bought some land... His friends never repaid their debts."

For some reason then, I doubt that Solon's reforms were selfless attempts at helping everybody, if he was willing to exploit his coming reforms for the sake of profit. Perhaps the purpose of his reforms was more Machiavellian than is currently believed by historians.

Is it possible that these "debt relief" programs were created specifically for the purpose of creating a sense of dependence and gratitude among the common folk? Within 100 years of Solon's death, the power of Athens skyrocketed and they began to form their own empire as the head of the Delian League. Perhaps the loyal army that was used by the oligarchs to expand their power over this time was so loyal and willing to fight and die for their ruling elite because of this initial program of debt relief.

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The concept of debt relief is tied intimately with the religious concept of "redemption" and occurred not only in Solon's Athens and Joseph's Egypt, but also among the Semitic Hittites, Hurrians, and Babylonians... overall, it seems to have originated with the Semites, and the fact that Solon brought it to Athens is therefore, to me, highly suspicious (perhaps it is no coincidence that "Solon" is only two letters away from "Solomon"):

"The concept of redemption is one idea that is found in both the Hittite text and the Bible.

"Redemption was very important to the people of the Near East, especially to the Hebrews, as they changed their nomadic ways and became peasants after settling in Israel. Land was very important, and if a family lost its land by falling on hard times, it was extremely disadvantaged. Redemption from debt was a way by which the society ensured that no family or tribe would be wiped out by hard times," he said.

The Hittite and Hurrian references to redemption come from a passage titled "The Song of Debt Release," which was excavated in the Hittite capital several years ago. The concept may have originated with the Hurrians, or possibly with other cultures in the ancient Near East. A variation of the same practice was known to the Babylonians during the period in which the Hebrew patriarch Abraham lived." (http://chronicle.uchicago.edu/960201/hittites.shtml)

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Perhaps this was an early technique employed by the international oligarchs at instilling dependency upon them among the general public, as well as creating within them a sense of gratitude and obligation. Rather than forcing them to act as slaves, which creates nothing but anger and resentment against them, they broke them down and ruined their former independent lifestyles, enslaved them by force for a time to engender dependence, and then graciously "relieved" their debts (after fleecing them for all they had, of course), and set them "free"... but since their former lives were ruined and the difficulty in re-establishing independent agrarian lifestyles is incredibly difficult, many would "choose" to work in service of their "benefactors" for the "security" they provided.

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